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Ulster County Legislature

Minority Platform Address

February 19, 2008

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MINORITY PLATFORM 2008—FINAL

**Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues of the
Legislature, Members of The Press and Mr. Chairman—**

**I am honored to be standing here as Minority Leader to be
giving the Minority Platform—Thank you for your support
and confidence in me to lead our Caucus forward.**

**I will start out with what I feel is an appropriate quote from
Benjamin Franklin: “You may delay, but time will not.” We
can relate this to the actions of the Majority Party over the last
24 months: Study and Delay—Delay and Study. We must
look ahead to the future of our County. Delays will benefit no
one and often prove to be more costly. We should move
forward cautiously keeping the taxpayers’ best interests in
mind while making difficult decisions.**

The Majority Party promised the people of the County a cost on the Charter. In a resolution from October 2006 sponsored by the Republican Caucus, we asked the Ulster County Administrator to Prepare a Cost Analysis of the Projected Financial Impact Upon Ulster County of the Ulster County Charter for Publication No Later Than October 31st, 2006.

Today, we still do not know what our County Charter will cost once implemented. Rather than delay any further what the cost of implementing the new Ulster County Charter will be, we must consider how these additional expenses will be offset in the 2009 Budget. This could be a significant expense to the taxpayers of Ulster County—We should know what the cost will be—NOW.

We have an election this year for a County Executive, our first ever.

People who aspire to this position should know the tools they will have to work with along with other important facts before they get involved in the political process that will be starting soon.

We must move forward without delay in developing and implementing a fair, workable Ethics Law.

The Majority has delayed appropriating funds to allow departments to function properly (i.e., enabling the District Attorney to investigate the Law Enforcement Center).

It should always be a high priority—indeed it was during the Elections.

The Democratic Majority has studied County owned properties—yet no action has been taken.

We are going to re-visit and re-study again a County owned automobile policy—a matter which was addressed in September 2007.

We do not need a NEW policy—or a NEW STUDY—simply stated, the existing policy needs to be implemented. The County Administrator has failed—to date—to enforce this existing policy. I call upon the County Administrator to implement this policy immediately which was passed by Resolution No. 319 on September 11, 2007 by the Legislature. A major issue that needs to be addressed on a strong bi-partisan basis is Economic Development. We are exporting too many of our young people to seek employment in other areas. We need to provide the educational opportunities and resources to attract and retain activities that provide job opportunities for our people—both our young workers and senior citizens—here in Ulster County. Economic Development does not have to be studied again. A plan has to be implemented. Immediate action is needed NOW. We cannot wait for the development of a five year plan to see what the future holds for Ulster County.

The Tech City site with the recent addition of the Schrade facility, along with the economic devastation of our Ellenville area, illustrate the immediate need for our County Legislature to put the people in place that can make things happen. We need to create and implement a plan so our residents will remain and have a future in our County. We need to make this happen NOW!!

We need to take down all the road blocks that have been put up AND replace them with “WELCOME TO ULSTER COUNTY” signs.

The Ulster County Industrial Development Agency should be focused on providing resources that retain and attract job opportunities.

We need real jobs with employer incentives to keep hardworking families here in Ulster County. That should be their “sole” function—other agendas should be left to another forum.

The Mantra of this Legislative body should be “Job Opportunity.” More importantly—we should put political agendas aside for the welfare of the taxpayers of Ulster County.

Once again —we, the Republican Minority, propose the following “positive” agenda for the betterment of the people of Ulster County:

We need to establish a comprehensive plan that includes goals and initiatives for the future. We need to develop and implement a plan for economic development and tourism. This should be priority number ONE!

We need to take a long hard look at the Governor’s proposed budget.

In particular, we need to know what the financial impact this budget will have on our County as the Governor tries to shift more of the State tax burden to the local level. What effect will this have on our residents? A plan to fight this shift is a plan that every Legislator must sign on to.

In addition, we must work, on a bi-partisan basis, to get the message across to our elected State legislators. If the Governor's proposed budget is passed, a tremendous hardship will be imposed on the taxpayers of Ulster County. The burden will be overwhelming. We, as Legislators, have a responsibility to sound the alarm to our constituents so they can contact the Governor and our State representatives. The taxpayers of Ulster County do not need more taxes. We do not need a Bed Tax, Mortgage Tax or Transfer Tax. The residents of Ulster County can no longer afford any more taxes.

We have been misled for several years on those needs (i.e., sales tax, property tax) in our County and now we have the Governor trying to pass the lack of State fiscal restraint on to the backs of Ulster County taxpayers. More than ever, we need to exercise fiscal restraint.

We need to closely watch our spending.

We need to execute a plan, an Economic Development Plan that will increase our sales tax revenue from outside sources.

With the attraction of more business to our County our tax base will become a bigger asset. With an increase in Tourism, our sales tax revenues will increase and reduce the need for our taxpayers to pay any additional taxes.

We have over 2000 employees in Ulster County. These people are the ambassadors for the County everywhere they go—they are an important sales force for our County. They make our County function efficiently.

We need to improve our relations with our County employees.

As Legislators we should get to know our employees better and listen to their concerns. When was the last time any of us visited the departments we oversee and spoke to the department heads and employees that serve our County?

We need to examine more closely what has been done to the health care of our employees and our retirees. Has the action taken by the Majority Party been fair to these people—Who ultimately is responsible for the change in health insurance coverage?

Although our control over the school property tax issue is very limited, we support the creation of the Blue Ribbon Commission on property taxes reform. The school property tax issue is foremost in everyone's mind. We as a Legislative body must raise our voice and make sure it is heard loud and clear to get action in Albany for the relief the taxpayers of this County deserve. Not a tax increase as the Governor proposes. Whatever it takes to help the property owners of Ulster County get some relief. We as a Legislative body, are responsible to do that. The time is NOW.

Affordable housing is yet another key issue brought forward in last year's Minority Platform. We see the need for the Legislature to take a lead role in this very important issue. To date, the Majority Party has not effectively addressed this serious problem. Affordable housing for the needy, our young and our seniors leads to job creation in construction as well as stimulating other areas of the County's economics. We can't wait any longer and we should do this with a bi-partisan effort.

While much needs to be done in our County—we must be cognizant of the serious trends in our national economy. We in Ulster County do not live in a vacuum and if current unsettling trends continue, this Legislature must be willing and able to meet any challenge that a change in the economy creates. The future may require that we be prepared to tighten our belt.

Let us work together to provide necessary services to the people of our County.

Ulster County has much to offer—it is a wonderful place to live. We are all proud to be citizens of Ulster County—with a bi-partisan effort we can do much to improve our beautiful County and make it a better (safe) place for our children and be proud that we call Ulster County our home. Thank You...
